

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for making an incision in the skin of a slaughtered animal, which incision has at least two ends, comprising the steps:

processing the skin at the positions of the at least  
5 two ends of the incision, in order to prevent tearing of the skin from said positions onwards; and

making an incision for connecting said positions substantially to each other.

2. A method for making an incision in the skin of the  
10 belly of a slaughtered bird which is provided with a vent opening produced by cutting out the vent, comprising the steps:

processing the skin at a position near the bottom  
point of the breastbone of the bird, in order to prevent  
15 tearing of the skin from said position onwards; and

making an incision for connecting the vent opening and said position substantially to each other.

3. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the incision contains a plurality of non-interconnected sub-incisions.

20 4. The method of claim 2, wherein at least a part of the incision is made in the direction from the breastbone up to said position.

5. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the skin processing operation comprises fitting a clamping element  
25 for clamping a part of the skin.

6. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the skin processing operation comprises thermal, optical or chemical treatment of a part of the skin.

7. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the skin  
30 processing operation comprises applying a setting liquid to a part of the skin.

8. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the skin processing operation comprises making a hole in the skin.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein at least one hole is  
35 made in the skin before the incision is made or while the incision is being made.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein at least one hole in

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the skin is substantially rounded.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein at least one hole in the skin is punched.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein for forming the at least one hole in the skin a part of the skin with the dimensions of the hole is cut away, leaving a residual connection.

13. The method of claim 8, wherein a hole supporting element is fitted subcutaneously through an opening in the skin, in order to support the skin during the making of at least one hole in the skin.

14. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein an incision supporting element is fitted subcutaneously through an opening in the skin, in order to support the skin during the making of the incision.

15. The method of claims 3 and 13, or 3 and 14, wherein after making the sub-incisions, the skin parts between the sub-incisions are torn by the hole supporting element and/or the incision supporting element.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the carcass of the slaughtered animal is brought to above atmospheric gas pressure at least at the position of the skin processing operation.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein a viscera protection element for protecting the viscera of the slaughtered animal from damage is fitted through the skin opening in the carcass prior to or during the fitting of the hole supporting element or the incision supporting element.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein during the subcutaneous fitting of the hole supporting element or the incision supporting element or during the period that they have been fitted subcutaneously, tissue connections between the belly skin and the viscera, in particular between the belly fat situated on the inside of the belly skin and the stomach, are broken.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said tissue connections are broken by means of at least part of the hole supporting element or the incision supporting element.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said at least part of the hole supporting element or the incision supporting element is elongated and performs a rotating movement.

21. A device for making an incision in the skin of a  
5 slaughtered animal, which incision has at least two ends, comprising:

processing means for processing the skin at the positions of the at least two ends of the incision, in order to prevent tearing of the skin from said positions  
10 onwards; and

cutting means for making an incision which connects said positions substantially to each other.

22. A device for making an incision in the skin of the belly of a slaughtered bird which is provided with a vent  
15 opening produced by cutting out the vent, comprising:

skin processing means for processing the skin at a position near the bottom point of the breastbone of the bird, in order to prevent tearing of the skin from said position onwards; and

20 cutting means for making an incision which connects the vent opening and said position substantially to each other.

23. The device of claim 21 or 22, wherein the cutting means are adapted for making a series of non-interconnected  
25 sub-incisions.

24. The device of claim 21 or 22, wherein the skin processing means are adapted for fitting a clamping element for clamping a part of the skin.

25. The device of claim 21 or 22, wherein the skin  
30 processing means are adapted for performing a thermal, optical or chemical treatment of a part of the skin.

26. The device of claim 21 or 22, wherein the skin processing means are adapted for applying a setting liquid to a part of the skin.

35 27. The device of claim 21 or 22, wherein the skin processing means consist of perforating means for making a hole in the skin.

28. The device of claim 27, wherein the perforating means comprise a hole supporting element to be fitted under

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the skin and a perforating element fitted at the other side of the skin, the hole supporting element being adapted to interact with the perforating element to form the hole in the skin.

- 5 29. The device of claim 28, wherein the hole supporting element is provided with a through or blind hole, and in that the perforating element is adapted to be inserted at least partially in the hole of the hole supporting element, in order to form the hole in the skin.
- 10 30. The device of claim 28, wherein the perforating element or the hole supporting element is provided with a cutting edge.
31. The device of claim 29 or 30, wherein the perforating element tapers to a point at the side facing
- 15 the hole supporting element.
32. The device of claim 29 or 30, wherein the perforating element is rounded at the side facing the hole supporting element.
33. The device of claim 29 or 30, wherein the
- 20 transverse dimensions of the hole in the hole supporting element correspond substantially to or are smaller than the transverse dimensions of the part of the perforating element to be inserted in the hole of the hole supporting element.
- 25 34. The device of claim 28, wherein the hole supporting element is provided with a stop face, and in that the perforating element is adapted to be moved against the stop face, in order to form the hole in the skin.
35. The device of claim 34, wherein the end of the
- 30 perforating element facing the hole supporting element is provided with a cutting edge.
36. The device of claim 35, wherein the perforating element comprises a hollow tube.
37. The device of claim 36, wherein the interior of the
- 35 perforating element is connected to a suction device.
38. The device of claim 30, wherein the cutting edge has ends which do not coincide.
39. The device of claims 21 or 22, wherein the cutting means comprise an incision supporting element to be fitted

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under the skin and a cutting element fitted at the other side of the skin, which incision supporting element is adapted to interact with the cutting element, in order to make the incision.

5 40. The device of claim 39, wherein the incision supporting element is provided with a through or blind slit, and in that the cutting element is adapted to be inserted with a cutting edge thereof at least partially in the slit of the incision supporting element, in order to  
10 form the incision.

41. The device of claim 40, wherein the slit of the incision supporting element is bent, the cutting edge of the cutting element being adapted to enter the slit of the incision supporting element in the region of the bend.

15 42. The device of claims 28 and 39, wherein the incision supporting element and the hole supporting element are formed by a common supporting element.

43. The device of claims 23 and 28, wherein the hole supporting element and/or the incision supporting element  
20 are adapted for tearing the skin parts between the sub-incisions.

44. The device of claims 28 and 39, wherein the cutting element and the perforating element are interconnected and are moved in synchronism with each other.

25 45. The device of claim 22, comprising positioning means for positioning the processing means and the bottom point of the breastbone of the bird relative to each other.

46. The device of claim 45, wherein the positioning means comprise a stop face.

30 47. The device of claim 46, wherein the stop face is movable.

48. The device of claim 46, wherein the stop face is adapted for making contact against the bottom point of the breastbone.

35 49. The device of claim 46, wherein the stop face is adapted to act on the outside of the body of the slaughtered animal.

50. The device of claims 28 and 48, wherein the stop face is fitted on the hole supporting element.

51. The device of claim 45, comprising detection means for determining the position of the bottom point of the breastbone, the positioning means being adapted for positioning the carcass of the bird and the processing means relative to each other on the basis of the detection result of the detection means.
52. The device of claims 21 or 22, comprising gas supply means for introducing gas through an opening in the skin into the carcass of the slaughtered animal.
- 10 53. The device of claim 52, wherein the gas supply means are operative from outside the carcass.
54. The device of claim 28, comprising a protection element for protecting the viscera of the slaughtered animal from damage prior to or during the subcutaneous fitting of a hole supporting element, incision supporting element or common supporting element.
- 15 55. The device of claim 54, wherein the protection element is essentially cone-shaped.
56. The device of claim 28, wherein the hole supporting element, incision supporting element or common supporting element is adapted for breaking tissue connections between the belly skin and the viscera, in particular between the belly fat situated on the inside of the belly skin and the stomach.
- 20 57. The device of claim 28, wherein the hole supporting element, incision supporting element or common supporting element is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis.
58. A method for processing a slaughtered bird prior to evisceration of the carcass of the bird, wherein tissue connections between the belly skin and the viscera, in particular between the belly fat situated on the inside of the belly skin and the stomach, are broken.
- 30 59. The method of claim 58, comprising introducing separating means into the carcass of the bird through a hole in the skin, such as an opening obtained by cutting out the vent, in order to break the tissue connections.
60. The method of claim 59, wherein the separating means are moved in a rotating manner in the carcass.
61. The method of claim 59, wherein the separating

means are moved in a scraping manner between the belly skin and the viscera.

62. A device for processing a slaughtered bird prior to evisceration of the carcass of the bird, comprising  
5 separating means for breaking tissue connections between the belly skin and the viscera, in particular between the belly fat situated on the inside of the belly skin and the stomach.

63. The device of claim 62, comprising first moving  
10 means for moving the separating means in the carcass through a hole in the skin, such as an opening obtained by cutting out the vent.

64. The device of claim 63, wherein the first moving means are designed for moving the separating means in a  
15 rotating manner.

65. The device of claim 62, wherein the separating means are in the form of scraping means.

66. The device of claim 62, comprising second moving means for placing a protection element in the carcass prior  
20 to or during moving the separating means in the carcass.

67. A method for inserting a substantially elongated element with a free end under the skin of the belly of a slaughtered bird which is provided with a hole in the skin, such as an opening obtained by cutting out the vent,  
25 comprising the steps:

inserting a protection element through said hole into the bird, said element having a stop face which is adapted for pushing away the viscera from said hole;

positioning the free end of the elongated element in  
30 said hole near said stop face; and

rotating the elongated element, in order to insert the free end of the elongated element under the skin.

68. A device for processing a slaughtered bird, comprising:

35 a substantially elongated element for insertion under the skin of the belly of the bird;

a protection element for insertion into the bird through a hole in the skin, such as an opening obtained by cutting out the vent, said element having a stop face which

is adapted for pushing away the viscera from said hole;

moving means for positioning the free end of the elongated element in said hole near said stop face, and for rotating the elongated element for inserting the free end  
5 of the elongated element under the skin.

69. The device of claim 68, wherein the protection element is plate-shaped.

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